WHOLE EARTH REVIEW

Summer Solstice, 1996

Dear friend and *Whole Earth Review* subscriber:

**We've done the preaching. It's time for the practice. After pointing the way to sustainability for nearly 25 years, *Whole Earth Review* must become sustainable or die.**

The envelope was not a teaser. You will not receive the Summer (June) and Fall (September) issues of *Whole Earth Review*.

We're not dead yet. We intend to come back — with your help. Please read on. Your subscription will be extended for missed issues, but we ask you to bear with us for now.

As you know, *WER* is a nonprofit, living from year to year as our income has ebbed and flowed. Recently, we have been running a deficit of $20,000 a month. We could not pay the printer for Issue 90. So, we are taking a six-month sabbatical to re-invent a sustainable magazine. We have laid off most of the staff and shrunk the office space, and are devoting our full efforts to developing and implementing a workable business plan.

**Haven't we been here before? What's changed?**

The whole publishing industry is struggling. Niche publications, the Internet, pressures on readers' time, are squeezing everyone. Paper and postage costs have soared.

The huge success of early *Whole Earth Catalogs* and other projects helped underwrite *WER* for years, but those windfalls are over. We will break even on the *Millennium Whole Earth Catalog*, just barely. The proceeds from Point's sale of the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link) helped pay the bills for 1993 and 1994, but now *WER* has to support itself.

In the Whole Earth spirit of experimentation we also took risks. The previous Point administration lowered the subscription price from $27 to $20 in 1994, just as paper and postage costs took off. They invested capital in several projects and events that didn't pan out. We are going to keep experimenting — but we will also, for the first time, move *Whole Earth Review* toward self-sustaining operation based on sound business planning and principles.

We pledge our energy and resources to this effort. But we can't do it alone.

**Our Part:**

1. With a new Board of Trustees and new management, we have cut expenses sharply, reducing our deficit from $528,000 in 1994 to $148,000 last year. We're a lot leaner. (See enclosed financial report.)
2. During the sabbatical our strategy for *WER* includes four elements: creating a business plan for sustainability; reorganizing business accordingly; sharpening the editorial content and design; and developing the Board of Trustees and Editorial Board.

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3. We have assembled a strong business team. As we structure the plan in the coming weeks, we will be evaluating a regularized donor program, increased prices, membership options, strategic partnerships or merger with like-minded organizations, alternative business models, guerrilla marketing, new forms of Internet presence. And, yes, we are seriously considering carefully selected advertising.

4. Editorially, we will continue to look for the big picture, integrating large ideas with concrete details. We will explore the edge, where growth and development occur. We will scout important trends before they become mainstream. Others may concentrate on complaint, disaster, and despair; we will concentrate on tools and ideas that work.

   In a world that is losing whole cultures, spiritual traditions, and biological species, we offer no easy answers. Instead, we offer tools and skills to slow the degradation and to help build viable cultures for the next generations. You can find in our pages fresh insights into almost everything: sex, art, politics, crafts, war — salted with parody and humor. We create community, steer toward controversy, probe the uses and social limits of technology, explore the practice of ecological design. Perhaps Gary Snyder said it best:

> In the next century
> or the one beyond that
> they say,
> are valleys, pastures.
> We can meet there
> in peace if we make it.
> To climb these
> coming crests
> one word to you, to
> you and your children:
> stay together
> learn the flowers
> go light.

**Your Part:**

We're asking you for your money — and your ideas. We need a contribution from each of you who wants to continue to have *Whole Earth Review* in your life and in the culture. We will have to raise $600,000 over the next year and a half. That money will become the working capital for self-sustaining operation. The essential first step of the fund-raising campaign is to raise $150,000 from our subscribers this summer. We will use your contributions (a) to develop and implement the rest of our plan, and (b) to show grant-giving foundations and other sources that *WER* has extremely strong subscriber support. If we do not receive enough from subscribers this summer, *Whole Earth Review* will have to fold.

• Please respond by August 1 if possible. We need to be able to judge how much backing we have from subscribers when we go to other potential funders in August. Both the amount raised and the number of responses are essential to demonstrate that subscribers want to see *WER* continue. Any gift you can send now could make the difference. All gifts are tax-deductible.

• We are asking for $35. We hope some of you can give more (one subscriber recently walked into our shrinking offices, heard our story, and handed us $1,000 on the spot! Could you do that?)

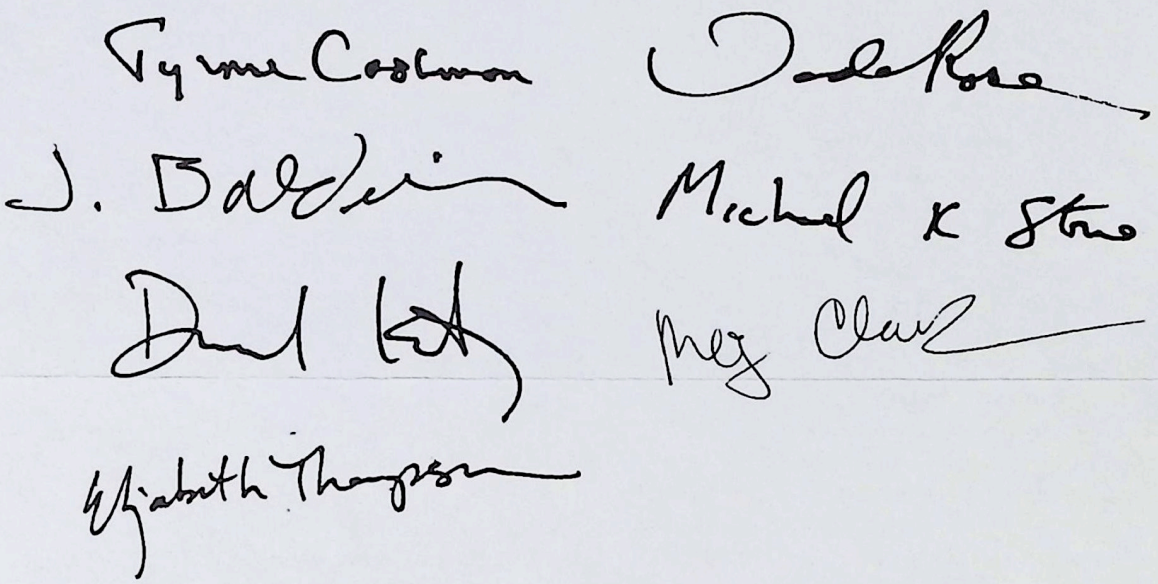
• Friends, it is a steep hill that we are proposing to climb. There are no guarantees. However, our history suggests that we should have confidence. In 1971, Stewart Brand published *The Last Whole Earth Catalog*, with the intention of going out of business after that. Instead, it showed it had a life of its own and refused to die. Since then, Whole Earth publications have displayed amazing resilience — mostly because of readers like you. *CoEvolution Quarterly/Whole Earth Review* has continued to serve and nourish the culture for 22 years.

Gary Snyder remarked to us recently that "no other journal provides the quantity of good information found in *The Whole Earth Review*." We are convinced that in these confusing times the world needs the clear, authentic voice of *WER* more than ever. Will you take the risk, with us, to keep it alive?

• We also want your editorial and business ideas. What do you value about *WER*? What would you change? What do you think about advertising? Do you know of potential partners or advertisers? Shall we move toward more Internet presence? Use the enclosed reply form, or email <wer@well.com>.

Whole Earth is making changes to become a stronger business and to remain the voice of a community committed to delight, concrete wisdom, and viable pathways in the future. If everything goes right, we hope to be up and running again in time for the Winter issue. We want you to be with us.

Sincerely,



P.S. Just as we were about to print this letter, we received word that we have been awarded a $20,000 grant from the Compton Foundation to help underwrite the transition to a sustainable *WER*. We're on our way!

# POINT FOUNDATION Financial Report

| | 1995 | 1994 |
|---|---|---|
| **Income** | | |
| Whole Earth Review (WER) Sales | 499,999 | 467,494 |
| Millennium Whole Earth Catalog (MWEC) Sales | 62,063 | 216,534 |
| Mailing List Rental | 17,757 | 6,104 |
| Royalties | 4,959 | 1,734 |
| Advertising | 10,777 | 3,222 |
| Gifts and Grants | 82,958 | 21,100 |
| Bookstore Sales | | 6,084 |
| Other | 2,612 | 5,303 |
| **Total** | 681,125 | 727,575 |
| | | |
| **Expenses** | | |
| Wages and Benefits: Point/WER | 256,980 | 360,285 |
| Wages and Benefits: MWEC | 3,660 | 195,440 |
| MWEC Distribution | 64,372 | 12,208 |
| WER Printing | 193,159 | 186,618 |
| Rent, Utilities, Janitorial | 54,475 | 84,908 |
| Insurance | 6,320 | 8,045 |
| Subscription Services | 43,332 | 48,423 |
| Postage & Shipping | 40,919 | 53,022 |
| Contributors | 33,787 | 79,383 |
| Depreciation | 33,052 | 34,255 |
| Bank Fees | 5,743 | 8,715 |
| Grants Expense | 6,427 | 3,500 |
| Subscription Development | 18,791 | 23,482 |
| Contract Services | 16,701 | 31,939 |
| Telephone | 10,610 | 16,629 |
| Office Supplies | 6,427 | 16,629 |
| Travel, Entertainment, Meals | 1,890 | 32,665 |
| Loss on Disposal of Equipment | 3,591 | 868 |
| Other | 29,402 | 58,683 |
| **Total** | 829,638 | 1,255,697 |
| | | |
| **Net for the Period** | (148,513) | (528,122) |

**Notes to the Financial Report**

1. Point fiscal year is January 1 - December 31.
2. WER Sales includes subscription and sales revenues and changes in subscription liability carry-forward.
3. MWEC Sales includes sales and (in 1994) publisher's advance.
4. In 1993, $326,000 in income and $165,400 in expenses for MWEC were recorded.
5. 1994 production expenses include completion of MWEC and 3 issues of WER; printing expenses also include Fall, 1993 WER. Total MWEC expenses for 1994 were $391,753, resulting in a net for the year for MWEC of ($175,219). Point/WER expenses were $863,945, for a net for Point/WER for the year of ($352,904).
6. In 1994, Contributors includes $43,732 to MWEC contributors and $35,651 to WER contributors.
7. In 1994, 90% of Travel, Entertainment, Meals, 40% of Other, $7,500 of Contract Services, and $21,000 of Wages were expended on development efforts and experimental programs.
8. During 1994, the Point bookstore ceased operations.
9. 1995 expenses include completion of 4 issues of WER. MWEC expenses for the year were $82,903, for a net for MWEC for the year of ($20,840). Point/WER expenses and net for the year were $746,735 and ($127,673) respectively.
10. In 1995, MWEC Distribution Expenses include $45,972 in payments to Harper San Francisco for MWECs sold by Point in 1994.